

# 10

# Smithfield



## ARIC ALMIROLA

### Racing for Those Who Make Freedom To Race Possible

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (May 21, 2020) – Aric Almirola and the No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang team for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) will head just a few miles down the road from the race shop for Sunday night’s Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway. This marks the third race in 11 days to continue NASCAR’s return to racing amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Almirola and the No. 10 team have had a strong return to racing by moving up a position in the point standings after a 12<sup>th</sup>-place finish in Sunday’s first race back at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway, then his best finish of eighth in the second Darlington race Wednesday night.



“I feel like we might have become even more competitive now that we’ve picked back up than we were before,” Almirola said. “We’ve got one of the crown jewels coming up this weekend. The 600-mile race at Charlotte is one everyone has on their bucket list to win. I’m excited based on the way we ran the last two races at Darlington. I’m excited to continue the momentum from Darlington and see if we can get ourselves a win.”

Once again joining the Memorial Day weekend tradition of honoring America’s fallen service members as part of the NASCAR Salutes initiative, the windshield header of each NASCAR Cup Series car will feature the name of a fallen service member. The No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang will feature United States Army SPC Seth Blevins. SPC Blevins was a 2008 graduate of Eastern High School in Sardina, Ohio, where he was in the band, ran track, played basketball and soccer. His academic and extracurricular activities qualified him for the National Honor Society.

SPC Blevins was heavily involved in his local community as a youth, participating in a number of activities including the Brown County Fair. He attended the University of Cincinnati, where he studied criminal justice. After being accepted into Ohio University in Athens, he applied for the ROTC program and joined the Army a year later.

The soldiers on SHR’s No. 4 Ford (Army SSGT Kristofferson B. Lorenzo), No. 10 (SPC Blevins) and No. 14 (Army PFC Andrew M. Krippner) were all members of the same unit that made the ultimate sacrifice in the same incident. On May 23, 2011, in eastern Kunar Province, Afghanistan, their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device. They were nominated by SHR fabricator Matthew Ridgway – who didn’t know them personally, but joined their battalion after the incident and, according to him, “(I) know them as well as you could know someone you’ve never met based on the stories from fellow soldiers they served with.”



“It is such an honor to drive a racecar on Memorial Day weekend and honor and remember some of the fallen heroes who have paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we get to do what we do,” Almirola said. “It is so cool and such a humbling experience to represent these men and women. For me, personally, I’ll be able to represent Seth Blevins, and to have his name on the windshield is just a very cool experience. To be able to pay my respect to someone like Seth, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country so we can be free every day, is amazing – but it’s not free. People like Seth and many more of our fallen heroes have paid that sacrifice and we’re so grateful and thankful for all of the men and women who serve our country.”

Almirola will run a special red, white, and blue patriotic paint scheme with Smithfield adorning the hood. Smithfield Foods Inc., who will sponsor Almirola’s car this weekend and at the majority of races this season, is an American food company with agricultural roots and a global reach. Its 40,000 U.S. employees are dedicated to producing “Good food. Responsibly®,” and have made it one of the world’s leading vertically integrated protein companies.

The 36-year-old Almirola has eight NASCAR Xfinity Series starts at Charlotte and garnered one top-five finish, three top-10s and has completed 99.4 percent of all possible laps. He also has two Charlotte starts in the NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series, which both resulted in top-10 finishes.

Almirola has three top-10s this season and sits seventh in the driver standings with 186 points – 72 behind first-place SHR teammate Kevin Harvick.

### **ARIC ALMIROLA, Driver of the No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:**

#### **What does it take to win at Charlotte?**

“It takes the same thing to win at Charlotte as it does Darlington, honestly. You’ve got to have a car that handles well with grip, and it’s a fast track. It’s got to be a fast car and unload fast with no practice and I feel like our organization has really closed the gap on where we were a year ago. We were not very good at Darlington last year, and then I felt like we could have had all SHR cars running in the top-10 this year. As an organization, we have certainly closed the gap and I think that will translate to Charlotte, as well.”

#### **Why is Charlotte a race that drivers have on their bucket list?**

“Charlotte has been really good to me. I think it will be nice to race at Charlotte, at home. It still stinks we can’t have fans there, but it’s still nice racing at home and knowing our shop is just a few miles up the road from the racetrack. We have a lot of pride running at Charlotte, knowing it’s a home race for the teams and the crew guys and everyone.”

#### **How is racing three times in 11 days?**

“Racing Darlington twice in four days is unique and challenging itself. Being able to go from Darlington to the next new racetrack will bring back some normalcy like we’re used to. I’m excited about that and excited to get back in the routine and get back going from track to track.”

## ARIC ALMIROLA’S CHARLOTTE PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	5/26	Coca-Cola 600	2	11	Running, 400/400	0	N/A
2018	9/13	Coca-Cola 600	9	13	Running, 399/400	0	N/A
	9/30	Bank of America Roval 400	20	19	Running, 109/109	0	N/A
2017	10/8	×Bank of America 500	24	24	Running, 337/337	0	N/A
2016	5/29	Coca-Cola 600	20	26	Running, 395/400	0	N/A
	10/9	Bank of America 500	33	15	Running, 334/334	0	N/A
2015	5/24	Coca-Cola 600	21	17	Running, 399/400	0	\$146,046
	10/11	Bank of America 500	9	10	Running, 334/334	0	\$133,651
2014	5/25	Coca-Cola 600	13	11	Running, 400/400	0	\$154,546
	10/11	Bank of America 500	15	22	Running, 332/334	0	\$116,276
2013	5/26	Coca-Cola 600	18	33	Accident, 324/400	0	\$131,066
	10/12	Bank of America 500	11	23	Running, 331/334	0	\$114,796
2012	5/27	Coca-Cola 600	1	16	Running, 398/400	4	\$177,466
	10/13	Bank of America 500	17	12	Running, 333/334	0	\$119,146

\* Race cut short due to weather. × Race length extended due to green-white-checkered finish.

= Qualifying canceled due to weather, starting position set via practice speed. ◇ Race length was extended due to overtime finish

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